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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 03 LAGOS 000886

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CAIRO FOR POL -- MAXSTADT

E.O. 12958: DECL: 04/27/2013

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SUBJECT: NIGERIA: SOUTH-SOUTH ELECTION LOSERS PLAY WAITING GAME

Classified By: POL-ECON CHIEF JOSEPH GREGOIRE. REASON: 1.5 (B & D).

11. (C) SUMMARY. In Nigeria's South-south, all six of the incumbent governors of the ruling People's Democratic Party (PDP) had their reelection confirmed by the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) after the April 19 election. The degree of election tampering varied starkly across and within the region's states (details to follow septel). Similarly, the losing parties are engaging in divergent tactics in response to the reported outcomes, ranging from "if you can't beat 'em, join 'em" to "let's bring back military rule and attack the oil companies." Though cause for monitoring, most of the losers' rhetoric can be dismissed as bluster. The likelihood of their grievances' being redressed by legal or extralegal means is slim at best. Delta, Edo, and Rivers states offer comparative examples of the major themes reverberating from the losing parties' drums. Meanwhile, the generality of the population they profess to represent may disengage from politics at least until 2007, when they may next have a chance to elect representative candidates. END SUMMARY.

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THE BAD: DELTA STATE  
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12. (C) THE PROCESS: Both the national legislative elections on April 12th and gubernatorial-presidential elections on the 19th displayed marked variation between the inland areas and the riverine and coastal areas of Delta State. Within the capital's local government areas (LGAs), elections were conducted reasonably well; in the swamps, elections were essentially a sham (septel to elaborate on Poloff observations in Delta).

13. (C) CONTESTING THE OUTCOME: Governor James Ibori's runner-up was Chief Great Ogboru from the Alliance for Democracy (AD) ticket. In his most significant statement so far, Ogboru denied having declared victory, but stopped short of conceding defeat. Ogboru's statement followed the announcement that police were investigating him for falsely claiming victory before the INEC results were announced, and the State Security Service (SSS) reportedly invited him for an interview as well. Police arrested five suspects, including the radio station proprietor and his staff, for allegedly airing news that Ogboru had won in Effurun on the 20th.

14. (C) At least one defeated AD candidate, Sunny Uwode of an Ethiope constituency, was arrested. Other unsuccessful candidates have called for cancellation of the National Assembly election results and the removal of Police Commissioner John Ahmada. The All Nigeria People's Party (ANPP), a major competitor though less visible in Delta as an adversary than in other states, has launched its share of contests against the polls. ANPP's House of Representatives candidate for Warri, Bolatsi Omatseye Dudu, petitioned the state INEC after elections were postponed in his district, but has yet to receive word that any will be rescheduled. The Igbo-based All People's Grand Alliance (APGA), which had a measurable showing in the national legislative and gubernatorial elections, has been less vocal in Delta about contesting its losses.

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THE VERY BAD: EDO STATE  
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15. (C) THE PROCESS: The PDP construed its overwhelming victory over the ANPP's competition as evidence that the party's core support is limited to the North. Observers noted major irregularities from the capital through the outlying areas. During the months leading up to the

elections, many of the PDP's rival politicians asserted having been the subjects of assaults, arrests, and intimidation.

16. (C) CONTESTING THE OUTCOME: No united front is likely to challenge the outcome of Edo's gubernatorial election. Governor Lucky Igbinedion's main challenger was ANPP's Senator Roland Owie, followed by the AD's Dr. Odion Ojo, the National Conscience Party's (NCP) Osagie Obayuwana, the United Nigeria Peoples Party's (UNPP) Dr. Clement Alile, and the NDP's Harry Igiehon. The ANPP in Edo has been torn for months by internal wrangling. Nowa Omorogbe, special assistant to the Governor's wife, told Poloff, "One of Owie's competitors from the ANPP's gubernatorial primaries, Matthew Urhoghide, has already publicly accepted the Governor's reelection. We think Owie will eventually accept it too." In the meantime, the course Owie's camp appears likely to take is to publicly denounce the elections as flawed, and see the reaction they get without hoping for much result. Owie's party agent Isaiah Osifo, who was "manhandled" and his "life threatened by PDP loyalists" at the state collation center, thought the PDP should have left him to "celebrate the decision of his conscience while they went about celebrating their victory." (Osifo was himself a PDP member until defecting to ANPP in March.) Another Osifo, Eddy Ehi Osifo, gubernatorial candidate of the Movement for Democracy and Justice (MDJ), publicly rejected the election results on April 23, but said he would focus on ways to counter fraud in future elections rather than contest the outcome of the last elections. In short, the PDP anticipates that some of the competition "will write to the courts," but "nobody will take to the streets. If they do, they will be arrested."

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THE VERY, VERY BAD: RIVERS STATE  
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17. (C) THE PROCESS: In Rivers, poloffs witnessed outright rigging and ballot stuffing throughout the state in both the national legislative and the gubernatorial-presidential elections. Massive vote rigging took place with the egregious collaboration of PDP agents and security personnel. In no LGAs did foreign or domestic observers find the process remotely approaching free or fair elections.

18. (C) CONTESTING THE OUTCOME: The major challenger to Rivers Governor Peter Odili was ANPP's Chief Sergeant Chidi Awuse. He may seek redress via the courts, but does not share the Rivers State ANPP secretary's radical minority viewpoint that "the army should take over the country and people should start blowing up oil pipelines in Rivers State." Some candidates from the losing parties have already decamped to the PDP, such as House of Assembly aspirant from the National Democratic Party (NDP) Benibo Granville. Saying the elections in Rivers thus far have been "free but not fair," Granville decided to follow former NDP gubernatorial candidate Dumo Lulu Briggs, who withdrew from the race. The "high level of corruption inherent in Nigerian political elections, which adversely affected all the opposition parties", provoked Lulu Briggs's decision. Other parties are weighing the merits of pursuing what appears to be a lost cause by contesting the election outcomes, against the potential gains to be had from supporting the party that cheated them.

19. (C) ANPP's other losing candidates have decided to take their cues for further action from the party's national leadership. ANPP collective stance is that no elections have taken place to date in Rivers. Ben Naanen, ANPP senatorial candidate for Southeast Rivers, confirmed to Poloff his belief that no elections took place in his constituency on April 12 and characterized the election as President Obasanjo's "civilian coup d'etat." (The only ward where Naanen carried the vote was in his stronghold of Ogoniland, where President Ledum Mitee of the Movement for the Survival of the Ogoni People (MOSOP) resides.) Although Naanen feels the losing candidates are not obliged to accept the outcome, he intends to follow whatever course of action is charted from the ANPP's top leadership and General Buhari. This would not extend, however, to Buhari's reported calls for military intervention. "I can't imagine ANPP calling for a military coup," Naanen said. "We wouldn't support that."

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COMMENT  
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110. (C) The South-south holds Nigeria's most critical resources, the arteries of the Federal Government: oil, gas,

and a few refineries, ports and export-import processing zones. The PDP-controlled GON is unlikely to tolerate legal challenges to the PDP's victories in the region. The question of INEC and the judicial system's impartiality aside, the losing candidates' potential recourse is limited (septel to follow on judicial system's preparations for election challenges in court). South-south public opinion seems to be leaning toward acknowledging the futility of challenging the outcomes if not agreeing with the PDP victory. Without popular backing for a massive challenge to the outcome of the elections, the losing parties are unlikely to get far.

11. (C) COMMENT CONT'D. We do not think it unwise for us to dismiss most of the defeated candidates' rhetoric as bluster. They know that the likelihood of their grievances' being redressed by legal or extralegal means is slim at best. Those who might persist in challenging the election outcomes outside of the courts would almost surely face arrest on grounds of sedition or risk violent encounters with armed personnel, ranging from military forces in Delta's Warri and Escravos areas to police and state security throughout the South. Menwhie the PDP will continue to consolidate its power i the coming weeks. The electorate will react by hoosing one of three options: mounting organized eforts to sway the state and local governments toard policies they favor, looking to 2007 as thei next chance to elect representative candidates,or disengaging from politics with apathy. Unfortunately, the last option is apt to be the choice f the much-abused population. END COMMENT.  
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